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Disabled find dignity in work

A photo exhibition by Handicap International and the French Embassy is showing how opportunity can give China's disabled the gift of hope.



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Stone village stands unchanged

This remote village, located in the mountains near Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, is the site of many historical stories and legends.

Exceptional dancers



When it was founded in early 2008, TAO Dance Theater seemed doomed: it could not afford a rehearsal studio and suffered considerable financial losses at its first performance.

Today, TAO is a leader in the world of Chinese modern dance and the only mainland troupe to

receive a paid invitation to perform at several international festivals.

The theater's success is exceptional, and the dancers know it. TAO says the difficulties it faced continue to thwart the success of China's young dance troupes.

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halts plans for
slapstick

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lose big after
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designs with
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Residents don masks to battle bad air

By Han Manman

Sales of face masks surged more than tenfold this week as smog choked the capital's residents.

Heavy air fell over Beijing on Sunday, when visibility dropped to 500 meters in some areas.

The smog thickened rapidly, and by Tuesday had caused the cancellation of more than 370 flights and the closure of many highways due to poor visibility. Many drivers had to use their high-beam lights to navigate roadways at high noon.

Fearing lasting health complications, many residents began wearing masks while outdoors.

"I'm not just worried about the smog – I'm worried about whether the particles in it will cause long-term health problems," said Chen Yuting, a local resident.

Chen purchased several face masks for all the members of her family.

A salesperson surnamed Wang from Panfeng Online Shop, one of the biggest sellers of face masks on Taobao Mall, said her fingers were sore from answering thousands of e-mail inquiries about the masks since Sunday.

"On a good day, we usually sell more than 100 face



Fearing lasting health complications, many residents have been wearing masks since last Sunday.
CFP Photo

masks. However, we are getting more than 1,000 orders per day since the smog settled in," she said.

Wang said her store's best mask was a model designed by 3M and popularized by star hurdler Liu Xiang.

Sales records from Taobao Mall showed that more than 30,000 masks were sold on

Sunday – more than 20,000 of these were purchased by customers in Beijing.

A government proposal to tighten the nation's pollution monitoring by adopting the PM 2.5 measurement of microscopic airborne particles has won support from the public, the Ministry of Environmental Protection said Wednesday.

The PM 2.5 measurement assigns a rating based on the amount of airborne particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers in size. The government currently uses the older PM 10, which measures only matter smaller than 10 micrometers.

However, widespread dissatisfaction with air quality

has led to mounting public pressure to adopt the stricter standards, which better reflects the health risks posed by polluted air: smaller particles are more hazardous as they can penetrate deeper into the lungs.

The draft would make PM 2.5 a national standard by 2016. The central government said it may implement the standard in some regions ahead of that deadline.

The *Beijing Times* reported that a new air quality monitoring system will be used to collect PM 2.5 data at a station situated between the Beijing and Tianjin municipalities.

Aside from PM 2.5 matter, which comes mainly from industrial discharge and vehicle exhausts, the new station would also monitor trace gases such as ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide.

The monitoring data from the station will be used exclusively for scientific research and will not be made available to the public, the *Beijing Times* reported.

The system, however, could provide early warnings for major sources of air pollution as the station improves its equipment to analyze the density changes in PM 2.5 matter.

City pledges to retain residents after renovation

By Zhao Hongyi

Municipal officials are planning a mass renovation of more downtown commercial blocks.

While past efforts to repair the aging hutong saw communities broken up in favor of commercial interests and residents evicted to the outskirts of the capital, officials pledged in their recent draft that this time it will be different.

Urban planners want to keep a certain proportion of current residents after renovating a number of historical commercial blocks in the downtown area, according to the recently released draft for the historical sites protection in the next five years.

The proposal highlights the key value communities play in the value of historical sites, stating that residents are essential to preserving the cultural character of centuries-old heritage sites.

"In the past, we moved all these residents out to the farthest outskirts of the city. This time, we want them to remain in their original blocks," said Zhou Dadi, an officer at the municipal commission of urban planning.

Qianmen Commercial Street and Nanluogu Xiang will be the top two projects for the next few years. Most residents in this round of construction will not have to worry about being evicted

from their familiar courtyards and lanes.

"A few people may be forced to move, but we will do our best to accommodate everyone," Zhou said.

Residents whose homes are renovated will have the option to take a cash payment if they choose not to return.

During the 12th Five-Year Plan, Beijing will focus on the renovation of the 7.8-kilometer line from Gulou, north of the Forbidden City, to Yongdingmen Tower in the south, as well as along the east-west line from Fuchengmen to Chaoyangmen and the belt between Chang'an Avenue and Qianmen Square.

The document said renovation projects will focus on strengthening communities and transportation access, as well as protecting relics and other cultural heritage.

Qianmen has long been the capital's most important commercial street. A commercial tower that combines Renaissance style with Republican-era taste will be built to replace the original Qianmen building, which is currently a hotel.

Lanes on Nanluogu Xiang will be widened, and more traditional stores will be invited to open on the street. The government intends for it to be similar to the Shichahai renovation, which is part of a UNESCO cultural heritage

protection bid that would include the greater Great Canal from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province to Beijing.

"The strategy and focus of renovation is changing from building hardware to preserving civilization," said Wang June, a professor of social science at Peking University.

In the past five years, Beijing spent nearly 1.8 billion yuan to repair old blocks and improve their infrastructure.

The municipality has renovated more than 5,000 traditional courtyards, rebuilt 1.1 million square meters of residential communities and improved the living standards of 50,000 households in the downtown area, Zhou Dadi said.

Cricket fights lead to cultural revival

By Zhao Hongyi

"Bite him! Bite him!"

The shouts come from a group of middle-aged men who have gathered in a downtown luxury suite. Using a piece of straw, they poke and prod at a pair of crickets hoping to start a fierce battle.

The Beijing Wudetang Club has made such combat sessions a weekly event since October. It costs 100 yuan to participate, and the winner can take home a prize purse of 2,000 yuan.

Cricket fighting has a long history in China, where it was first practiced by emperors during the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

Many poets, painters and scholars have written fondly of crickets and the noises they make. However, cricket fighting became outlawed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) as a "meaningless bourgeois predilection."

But 30 years of economic development have given people more time to pursue entertainment, and cricket fighting is making a comeback.

Fighting crickets cost between 20 and 800 yuan, depending on their quality and fighting ability.

Before each fight, the crickets are weighed on specially manufactured electronic scales. The two crickets are then placed in a clay pot or a plastic basin and prodded by



Cricket fighting is finding new fans in Beijing.

their owners until they begin to bite and attack each other using their claws.

Crickets are usually kept in their own clay pots with

beds of sand and clay. Their diets include shrimps, beans and goat livers.

"They are real fighters and demand respect," one of the



Cricket fighting has a long history in China. CFP Photos

participants said. "A fighting cricket is valued like a horse and requires proper care."

The south side of Beijing has a large insect market that trades in every pet imaginable. Cricket trainers purchase crickets in batches of 100 to 200 in hopes of finding a fighter.

The overall industry of cricket feeding, training and relevant business is estimated to involve more than 400 million yuan each year. Many cricket associations can be found throughout the country, and there are as many as 20 websites devoted to sharing information, experience and new about upcoming competitions.

The revival of cricket fighting has attracted the attention of foreign media outlets, such as the *New York Times* and *Sankei Shimbun*.

Cricket fighting is only one of the traditional entertainment forms to see a revival in spite of the government's

attempts to promote other cultural hobbies like mahjong and ring puzzles.

However, mahjong is finding fans in foreign countries. Chinese media recently reported on the popularity of mahjong clubs throughout Europe and North America.

"We Chinese have a wealth of entertainment heritage," said Gao Fei, a professor of Chinese history at Peking University. "What we need to do is find a way to polish and improve these hobbies to make them compatible with modern life."

He said the popularity of traditional culture and entertainment abroad will help Chinese people to more confidently embrace their own historical pastimes.

"This is an important step in transforming our growth and upgrading our development, and one that the government has been calling for years," he said.

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Local comedy troupe banned for lack of diplomas

By Chu Meng

In spite of Beijing's plans to transform itself into a national cultural and artistic powerhouse, grassroots groups and individual performers are being denied access to performance spaces by district-level government.

Among the casualties of this policy is Beijing Jili Comic Group, a slapstick troupe led by local migrant worker Wang Huajiang.

Wang has spent the past 10 months petitioning the Chaoyang District Cultural Commission for permission to stage his original comedies for profit in the city.



Living in the City of Beijing is Wang's debut script. His actors rehearse every day in a bungalow leased on the city's east side.

Photos are cut from Wang's video data

Wang Huajiang was crestfallen last Wednesday.

The 42-year-old farmer from Hubei Province was hoping for good news after 10 months of campaigning to stage one of his comedies in the capital. Unfortunately, the Chaoyang District Cultural Commission chose to reject his application for a seventh time.

The reason? His actors "lacked professional performing qualifications" and university diplomas.

Ten months ago, Wang founded Beijing Jili Comic Group, a blue-collar comedy troupe composed of seven other farmers who had come to the city to work as day laborers.

The performers were selected by Wang from around 50 candidates. The group relies on physical humor, utilizing miming and slapstick like the famous silent film comedian Charlie Chaplin.

Wang is the group's script writer, director, artistic consultant, filming technique director and logistics manager.

But Wang's performing group was refused the necessary certification to stage commercial performances because neither he nor his performers had been registered by the cultural commission.

For Wang's troupe, such registration is impossible. The Ministry of Culture requires that at least three members of all performing groups in the country have professionally-recognized qualifications or a degree in the performing arts granted by an accredited university.

"We came to the capital as migrant workers precisely because we never had access to such education," Wang said.

"Anyone wishing to put on a commercial performance that sells tickets or turns a profit must have graduated from an arts college or hold professional acting certification. That is the most basic requirement imposed by the authorities to ensure the quality of the nation's cultural and performing industry," a spokesperson for the commission speaking on its hotline said.

In addition, all performing members must have a permanent address and a fixed place to perform, rehearse and store equipment. They must also deposit a large sum of capital in order to

"ensure their sustainability."

The group must also be classified as an existing performance art style, such as Peking opera, acrobatics or theater, the spokesperson said. Each style is supervised by a separate administrative authority or organization.

Wang fell in love with acting as a child, and was inspired to found a comic troupe after seeing a Charlie Chaplin video at a wholesale market on the south side of Beijing in 2009.

"Suddenly, I felt like his style was something I was born to emulate," he said.

Immediately, he decided to write his own comedies telling stories about migrant workers living in the capital. He quit his job of delivering papers at the *Beijing Time's* circulation department in March, going back home engaged in script writing only.

He began interviewing more than 50 graduates from professional schools such as the Beijing Film Academy, but they were not able to perform in a natural or funny way.

"Chaplin's slapstick was neither serious drama nor crosstalk. My scripts were based on the real experiences of migrant workers in Beijing," he said.

In the end, seven performers without a professional background made the cut, including Wang's 18-year-old son.

"It's not that I don't want professionals with solid training. They're simply not suitable for my comedy, and I can't meet their expected wages," said Wang.

Wang invested more than 100,000 yuan and spent two years honing his debut script, *Living in the City of Beijing*. The story followed a farmer who came from Hubei Province to Beijing, and was inspired from Wang's own experiences.

Wang was told their club could not perform commercially, although they had registered with the municipal administration of industry and commerce as a private drama club.

"That limited us to non-profit performances. But I wrote these plays and I want to sell tickets. I want to see whether my art can survive in the market," he said.

Very few performances have ever been crafted about the lives of migrant workers. Even fewer have been created by migrant workers.

"A cultural commission



Charlie Chaplin, an icon of silent film, is Wang Huajiang's inspiration.

employee suggested I find an agent so that we don't need to worry about qualifications. But I don't want others telling me what to do or setting restrictions and requirements," he said.

For the past 10 months, Wang has leased a 200-square-meter rehearsal hall in Xiashinbao Village, outside the East Fifth Ring Road. He, his wife and son and the seven actors live nearby. The group rehearses from 9 am to 6 pm every day.

Zhang Zhongfei, 27, a group member from Henan Province, said he felt happy performing, and that Wang pays each actor a monthly salary and provides lunch.

"I used to be a movie extra earning 30 yuan and a free lunch each. Now I make 2,400 yuan per month. I hope we'll be able to perform in a real theater and become famous – even without professional instruction," Zhang said.

Wang is now working on extending the first play into a series. He plans to follow *Living in the City of Beijing* with another play named *Beijing Spirits*.

"Few stories are told by the mouths of farmers working in the city. I want *Beijing Spirits* to be about our dedication to struggle – for migrants, no struggle means no success," Wang said.

He hopes that grassroots performers like his troupe can find performing opportunities even without professional qualifications. The market should decide whether or not a group has what it takes to succeed.

Zhao Ningyu, a professor at Communication University of China and movie critic, said that while private actors and performing groups were not barred from performing, they are barred from profiting from their work.

"Grassroots groups should be encouraged to go on stage and fulfill their dreams. Authorities need to be more innovative when administering China's cultural industry to give dedicated performers like Wang a chance," he said.

A brake on gov't cars



Zhang Heping/CFP Photo

A Volkswagen AG Audi A6 sits outside Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

The country has issued new rules for vehicles purchased by public servants following its car reform in May.

The new regulation, signed last month by several ministries, requires government bodies across the country to spend less and buy more fuel-efficient vehicles, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

Many government officials are allowed to purchase luxury cars like the Audi A6 and Mercedes-Benz E-Class. The new rules require that they can only buy vehicles that are priced below 180,000 yuan with not more than 1.8

liters in engine displacement.

The central government came out with similar regulations in 2004 while capping the maximum price for an official car at 250,000 yuan.

Earlier this year, the State Council carried out “the strictest official car reform in history” to regulate the use of government cars, which has long been seen as one of the biggest sources of waste and corruption.

It requires all government agencies above the county level to publish the figures of their spending on cars.

(Agencies)

The third eye

New policy to benefit domestic brands

By Huang Daohen

While local officials are known to pursue imported luxury vehicles instead of homemade cars for their official use, the government's latest moves are expected to change this tendency, said Damon Zhang, an analyst with Auto Home, a local automobile news portal.

According to a survey by the site, German vehicle brand Audi tops the government departments' official car purchase list, followed by Volkswagen and the local brand Hongqi.

Global brands, the Audi A6 in particular, have even become the symbol of official cars in the country as more such cars bear the "official entry pass" on the road, Zhang said.

In February, news hit the cover of local media while a finance department in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was exposed to have allocated 9 million yuan from public funds for the purchase of 25 Audi cars.

And that's only the tip of the iceberg.

Incomplete statistics show that governments at all levels across the country spent about 100 billion yuan on cars in 2010.

"It's not only about waste or cor-

ruption, but a huge market we're talking about, for both Chinese and foreign car makers, and the local GDP as well," Zhang said.

The central government knows it. In 2009, a proposal by the State Council required that local governments buy homemade vehicles when replacing their old official cars, and require that no less than 50 percent of the vehicles be domestic brands, Xinhua reported previously.

However, it's still hard for local carmakers like BYD, Geely and Chery to secure orders from the government, Zhang said.

But we should applaud the government's recent move to further cut the budget, Zhang said. "Though it aims to curb emissions and reduce government expenses, it also prohibits the purchase of luxury vehicles."

Zhang said there will be more standards and price guides for the government in the future.

For local brands, Zhang said efforts should be made toward new and green energy vehicles.

"Electric vehicles, which often get about 200 kilometers per charge, are suitable for official use, since they travel short distances within cities," he said.



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Business in muddy waters

US researchers rake in money by shorting Chinese companies

By Huang Daohen

Advice kills: just ask Focus Media.

The Shanghai-based advertising firm saw its shares shed half their value after the US research firm Muddy Waters advised investors to sell.

Muddy Waters' advice was capitalism at its finest. By shorting US-listed Chinese companies, the firm is raking in big money.



The Muddy Waters' report wiped out Focus Media's \$1.3 billion in market value.

CFP Photo

Trapped

Ancient Chinese wisdom claims that muddy and turbid water makes for better fishing.

Centuries later, no one understands this better than Carson Block. However, the American investment adviser isn't catching fish – he's catching ailing Chinese firms.

On his company's official site, Block, 34, founder of Muddy Waters, said he has a knack for recognizing a Chinese company's true worth that may be hidden behind botched books and shady domestic mergers.

The Hong Kong-registered firm, which has a branch in Shanghai with no fixed office or workers, has destroyed the stock market value of numerous Chinese companies listed overseas. It publishes extensive research reports on Chinese firms, often advising investors to dump and run.

Those reports are making it big money.

The New York-listed Focus Media was Muddy Waters' most recent target.

In a report published November 29, the firm declared that Focus Media had lied about the reach of its LCD advertising devices and accused the firm of insider trading and inflated acquisition deals.

Shares of the Chinese advertiser tumbled 66 percent on the Nasdaq, closing at \$15.43 (98.09 yuan) a share – a one-day drop of 39 percent.

The plunge wiped out \$1.3 billion in value, sending the company's share prices to their lowest in 52 weeks, Xinhua reported.

Jason Jiang, Focus Media's founder, said on his microblog that the company is in good shape and that it would pursue legal action.

Credit crisis

Focus Media was not Block's first victim.

In June 2010, Block released

his first investment research report after registering Muddy Waters as a firm.

The report, targeting Nasdaq-listed Oriental Paper, urged investors to sell their stock in the Hebei-based company. Block said he had visited the company's factory and that its intent to go public in the US was hokey.

The paper maker has been struggling ever since. Oriental Paper closed at \$8.33 that day before the report came out, and fell 13.2 percent to \$7.23 the next day.

As of Wednesday, its value had fallen to \$3.67.

Emboldened by its triumph, Muddy Waters decided to seek out more Chinese firms whose affairs it considered "murky" – especially those listed in the US.

It later released reports on Douyuan Global Water, Yurun Foods and Sino-Forest.

The June report about Sino-Forest made Muddy Waters famous, as many big institutional investors on Wall Street had put their money in the environmental protection firm.

Muddy Waters said the Canada-listed Sino-Forest used fraudulent accounting to overstate the value of its assets. The accusation caused an 80 percent drop in the company's share price.

Others foreign research firms also joined in. In November, Citron Research released two reports accusing Chinese Internet company Qihoo 360 of accounting fraud.

Listed Chinese companies are now facing a credibility crisis overseas after an increasing number of similar reports, said Jason Chen, an analyst with Galaxy Securities in Beijing.

Forty-six Chinese companies have been suspended or delisted in the US market this year.

Mandarin advantage

But with so many prestigious investment research-

ers like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley watching over Chinese companies, how has the tiny Muddy Waters managed to cause so much trouble?

Block attributed his advantage to a Bloomberg interview. He said knowing China was the biggest advantage in his research assessments.

Block came to Shanghai in 2005 and studied Chinese at a local university. He worked at a US law firm in Shanghai before starting a private storage house in 2007.

The work experience in Shanghai helped him learn how to gauge the secrets of business in China, Block said.

Still, there are plenty of foreign entrepreneurs in China with Chinese analysts and Harvard MBA degrees.

Galaxy's Chen said Block's father is the missing piece to the puzzle. Block's father is a PR magnate in Los Angeles with close ties with short sellers and who is interested in Chinese companies.

Among the companies Bill was looking at was Orient Paper.

"He needed someone to investigate the paper firm, so his son took the task to go inspect Orient Paper's factory in Baoding," Chen said.

When Carson Block saw abandoned gates and a row of dilapidated storage rooms and dormitories when he arrived at the site, he suggested to his father that they should short the company.

Investors who sold the shares of the paper firm were quoted later as saying that they were told Muddy Waters had very strong connections on the Chinese mainland, including domestic auditors, financial professionals and local officials.

"After you convince a few investors, it becomes easy," Chen said. The hedge funds

short stocks after receiving the doomsday reports and help drag down the price as much as possible.

Business culture

What research firms like Muddy Waters are doing – compiling reports for profit – is not illegal. Though it may be unethical.

"But everyone is playing ball, and that's how the game of the current capital market works," Chen said.

In 2009, the US Securities and Exchange Commission passed a rule that allows financial firms to sell stocks directly to investors interested in shorted stocks, which has opened up huge opportunities for short-sellers.

Chen said US investors know less about private business in China, and Chinese enterprises have little understanding of how the US capital markets work. Stocks, therefore, are easily manipulated by media reports.

"The regulatory loopholes in the financial market allow weak and even fake information to bring down a stock," Chen said.

The better way to secure an investment overseas is to understand the different business culture and how people think, he said.

Chen said private firms, like their US counterparts, exist to provide value to shareholders. However, most are family businesses designed to serve a few top interests and are very hierarchical.

State-owned enterprises, for their part, take a passive attitude toward expansion, viewing themselves as the country's strategic tools, Chen said.

For foreign investors who want to buy Chinese concept stocks, Chen said they need to focus on whether the companies are creating valued products – something rarely reflected by short reports.

Market watch

Behind the central bank's RRR cut

By Huang Daohen

In a rare move to give the sluggish economy a boost, the People's Bank of China announced last Wednesday it has cut the required reserve ratio (RRR) by 50 points, or half a percent, to 21 percent, for the first time in 35 months.

The cut, which took effect Monday, came apparently earlier than expected. Analysts said it may be a sign that the central government hopes to replenish economic growth after easing the country's inflationary pressures.

Statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics show that in the third quarter of this year, the nation's GDP growth slowed to a two-year low of 9.1 percent, a drop from 9.5 percent in the second quarter and 9.7 percent in the first quarter.

Zhao Xiao, economics professor at University of Science and Technology Beijing, called the cut a timely move.

"It is in line with market expectations as funds are strained at end of the year," he said.

The latest cut is expected to release about 396 billion yuan (\$62.38 billion) into the banking system, Xinhua reported.

Zhao said the increased liquidity would spur medium and small banks to lend funds to small businesses.

But Zhao said real estate developers who are experiencing hard times should not count on the cuts to ease their funding shortages.

The RRR cut is not strong enough to combat the current decline in real estate prices, Zhao said. "Major banks are still unwilling to lend to property developers until a comprehensive relaxation on monetary policy comes."

But will the cut end the bearish stock market?

At the news of the RRR cut, the Shanghai Composite rose 3.5 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng increased 5.8 percent.

The bullish rally, however, depends on whether the central bank's cut is a one-off measure, Zhao said. "We still need to see more conviction about the easing monetary policy," he said.

"The government needs to make sure that liquidity is reaching the right places," he said.

Thank you for smoking in the airport

By Zhao Hongyi

Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA) opened 12 of its 36 smoking areas in its three waiting halls over the weekend. The move received mixed responses.

The airport has 36 smoking areas, separated from other public venues by glass and equipped with machines to filter out the smoke.

The purpose of setting up these areas was to prevent people from smoking at the entrances of the halls.

In April, before World No-Tobacco Day, the Beijing Municipal Government launched a campaign to prohibit smoking in public venues. The purpose of the campaign was to end smoking in all public venues by 2014.

The airport shut down its 36 smoking areas in the spirit of the government's campaign, becoming the first in the country to do so.

But six months later, 12 of the 36 smoking areas have been reopened "under demand from passengers," said Hou Hongyan, a staff member of the airport management office.

"We faced great pressure from our passengers over the past six months," Hou said. Some heavy smokers ducked

into the bathroom to light up or smoked heavily around entrances.

"These smokers put other passengers at risk of dangerous fires and burdened our staff members," Hou said.

Many airports, such as those in Hong Kong, Singapore and Tokyo, have designated smoking areas in their international waiting halls, as many foreign passengers need to light up.

But passengers and netizens believe the airport has tarnished its reputation by caving in.

"You shouldn't have followed the authority's campaign earlier," a netizen wrote. "I can't help but wonder if the airport is trying to have it both ways by pretending to meet the demands of both the government and passengers."

BCIA had only one small waiting hall before the 1990s. The second hall was built in the late-'90s, and a third was added in 2007 for the Olympics. More than 80 million passengers passed through the three halls in 2010. The number is expected to reach 100 million this year.

A smoker enjoys a cigarette in the smoking room of Beijing Capital International Airport.



©Goh Chaihin/ICPhoto

Comment

Unreasonable to forbid smoking
I support the efforts to forbid smoking, but am not optimistic about the results. You can't completely get rid of smoking. Passengers and customers have various needs and demands. As the government and airport, you can persuade them to reduce smoking, but forbidding it won't work.

— Laoyanmin, netizen

Determination of airport?

There are non-smoking airports

around the world. The reopening of part of the smoking areas might bring trouble. Are you not determined to be a non-smoking airport? Are you meeting the demand of the authorities to shut down all 36 smoking areas?

The airport should have conducted a comprehensive initiative to shut down the smoking areas and come up with some alternative ways to meet the demands of smokers.

— Yang Jie, Chinese Center for

Disease Control and Prevention Embarrassing

The reopening of smoking areas shows what an embarrassing smoking control efforts are in China. The effort requires the help of the government and citizens alike.

The campaign to persuade smokers to give up their habit is a comprehensive task. We should not let "don't smoke" be merely a slogan.

— Yang Shouqi,
Xi'an Evening News

Binding laws are needed

The difficulty in preventing smoking comes from smokers' ignorance of the harmful effects. We have many proposals, initiatives and campaigns, but we don't have a law to forbid and control smoking, which reduces the effects of these proposals and campaigns.

— Xie Zhiyong, director,
Health Laws Research Center,
China University of
Political Science and Law

Debate of the week

Cao Cao tomb scholar unmasked as fraud

Yan Peidong, a mysterious scholar who became an overnight online sensation by claiming he had proof of the location of the tomb of Han Dynasty warlord Cao Cao, has been revealed as a fraud.

The official microblog of the public security bureau in the city of Xingtai, Hebei Province said last Sunday that the man claiming to be Yan Peidong is in fact a fugitive.

Yan is actually Hu Zejun, a con man wanted for more than six years for his involvement in numerous scams.

In 2005, he posed as a reporter to cheat people out of money by claiming that he could help villagers win lawsuits over land disputes. Local police have long offered a 500 yuan (\$79) bounty for his capture.

Local police said last month they visited a friend of Hu and discov-

ered Hu had boasted on several occasions that he was the academic Yan Peidong. After police compared photos of Hu and Yan, they confirmed that the two are the same man.

The police said that during his time on the run, Hu had used numerous pseudonyms such as Ren Jian'an, Wang Xiaoming, Liu Xubo, Liu Changli and Yan Peidong to carry out acts of fraud.

"Yan Peidong" is known to the public for his comments regarding the purported tomb of the Eastern Han warlord Cao Cao (155-220), one of the central figures of the Three Kingdoms period, the discovery of whose resting place was reported by archeologists in 2009, though its authenticity has been called into question.

Jingle smells

With Christmas around the corner, a picture taken in Wuhan, Hubei Province has gone viral: a trash can piled with used chopsticks and paper bowls to resemble a Christmas tree, reports *Wuhan Evening Post*.

The two-meter-tall Christmas "tree" picture was posted on Sina Weibo by a user last week and widely forwarded. More than 100 netizens asked where the picture was taken, while others said it was disgusting and harmed the city's image.

A reporter from the newspaper went to downtown Wuhan and found the trash can placed in front of a barbecue restaurant near a busy shopping street, which sees almost 100,000 passersby a day.

A cleaner surnamed Yin told the newspaper that there are more than

30 shops, mainly restaurants, concentrated on the 200-meter street.

During the weekend, herds of visitors leave huge amounts of litter. "There are not enough trash cans for the public and the store owners do not have enough time to clean the cans," Yin was quoted as by the newspaper as saying.

The reporter found there are only two trash cans placed on the street, apparently in violation of a local law which states there must be a public trash can every 50 meters on main streets.

Authorities said that most stores have reportedly refused to have a trash can in front of their premises on the grounds that the smell and appearance of the garbage might harm their business.

(Agencies)

Photo exhibition shows China's disabled leading dignified life

By Han Manman

While China in recent years has made an effort to improve the living conditions of disabled people, much disparity still remains in how they are treated, especially as it pertains to employment.

A recent photo exhibition held by Handicap International shows seven disabled Chinese and the stories of their life and work. The exhibition is a call for the public, particularly employers, to provide more chances for disabled people.

Dream high

In spite of her disability, Jiang Ruiyan believes she can do many jobs as well if not better than most people.

Her confidence stems from her work experience as a site code engineer for a local IT company. Jiang has reason to be proud: she's the leader of a project that will be launched this week.

But her success has been a long time coming. When she first graduated several years ago, she found it almost impossible to find a computer-related job in Beijing, even though she was well qualified.

Interviewers were blunt with her, saying things like, "We are deeply moved by your spirit as a disabled person, but your image doesn't comply with the image of our company."

"I can't accept this kind of reasoning because I don't think a job where I'm behind the computer all the time will affect a company's image," Jiang said.

Once, on the way to a job interview, she even heard someone behind her say, "Why don't cripples just stay home?"

Lacking an income, Jiang had to live in a bare house for several months. Two years later, she found her current work.

"I informed the company about my physical situation, but this time, without even an interview, I got an offer," she said.

"Writing code is like writing beautiful articles for me," she said. "When I imagine millions of people everyday browsing my websites, I feel very proud and feel I'm needed by society."

Jiang said her colleagues treat her as an equal.

"It's their encouragement that makes me forget that I have physical limitations," she said. "I live an active social life and a healthy life."

Life with dignity

Jiang's story was one of the seven that was presented in a photo exhibition titled "Employ Ability - A time for High Visibility," which



A disabled boy watching the exhibition last Friday



Photos provided by Handicap International

opened last Friday in Beijing on the eve of the 20th International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Jointly held by Handicap International and the French Embassy, the exhibition presented stories from people living in Beijing and Tianjin.

The exhibition's young photographer, Sun Zhiyuan, is visually impaired. His work provides a unique perspective on positive examples of people with disabilities being active in different work environments.

Deborah Bickler, China representative of Handicap International, said she hopes the exhibition will help more disabled people find jobs in China.

"We hope it will raise awareness and greater understanding amongst companies and organizations about disability - and even more impor-

tantly, of people's abilities, whatever their apparent 'disability,'" she said.

Jiang said she has lots of very talented friends who just need potential employers who are willing to look past their physical differences.

One of her friends, a self-trained painter with other artistic skills, has tried to get a job for six years but hasn't managed anything.

"Work for people with disabilities is very important because it helps them integrate with society and express their worth," Jiang said.

Bickler said the ability to earn a living and contribute to one's family income is one of the most important factors in creating acceptance of people with disabilities.

"While a person may have some kind of impairment or disability, they have many other abilities," she said. "In

giving an opportunity to someone to use their abilities in the workplace, it can give that person dignity and purpose."

More understanding necessary

According to a report by Handicap International, the disabled make up 15 percent of the world's population, and almost a fifth of that number suffer significantly. A quarter of the global population is directly affected by some kind of disability, as a caregiver or a family member.

Domestically, there are more than 80 million people in China living with disabilities; more than 60 million live in rural areas.

Xu Ling, an official from the China Disabled Persons' Federation, said in 2010 that the unemployment rate of people with disabilities in China was 8.6 percent, twice



Jiang Ruiyan says her work gives her a sense of self-worth.

as high as the overall unemployment rate.

"The real unemployment rate for disabled people is even higher," she said. "Even among the disabled who have a job, there are still problems such as low-end work and unfair pay."

However, Xu said the government has made great efforts to improve the working conditions for the disabled.

According to a statement released by the China Disabled Person's Federation (CDPF) on Monday, 3.76 million disabled people nationwide received some form of vocational or technical training between 2005 and 2010.

The CDPF said in the statement that it will train another 1.8 million disabled people in next five years, and it will launch a variety of programs to train millions more.

More than 4.4 million urban and rural citizens with disabilities are currently employed in China.

Figures from the CDPF indicate that more than 2 million disabled people have set up their own businesses under the country's preferential tax policies and with financial support from the government.

Bickler said besides government effort, society should be more understanding of this group.

"Rather than the disability being the limiting factor, it's more often the lack of understanding and existing stereotypes that are built-in barriers to the employment of people with disabilities," Bickler said. "But it's good to see that even if some obstacles remain, the recent change of attitudes and the willingness to find solutions to overcome some of these barriers to employment is starting to occur."

China to lend two pandas to France

By Han Manman

Two pandas will be sent to France early next year and will live there for a decade, according to the French embassy in Beijing.

Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding and the France-based Beauval Zoo signed a 10-year panda loan agreement at the French embassy in Beijing last Saturday.

After years of top-level negotiations, a deal on the pandas was to have been announced at the G20 summit in the French resort of Cannes in early November, but the announcement was delayed as leaders dealt with more pressing matters.

The pair will be the first pandas sent to France since the death of Yen Yen in 2000, who was given to former president Georges Pompidou in the 1970s along with another panda, who died shortly after arriving.

The two pandas are not the only recent pair to have been loaned to foreign coun-



Tian Tian being unloaded from a plane at Edinburgh Airport CFP Photo

tries. Two pandas recently arrived in the Edinburgh zoo in Scotland.

The pair of 8-year-olds – Tian Tian (Sweetie) and Yang Guang (Sunshine) – were born in 2003 at the China Conser-

vation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan Province. They will be the first giant pandas in the UK in 17 years, ever since Ming Ming was sent back to China from London Zoo in 1994.

Their arrival in the UK is part of a 10-year China-UK joint research program studying how human-bred pandas can survive in the wild. Tian Tian is expected to give birth during her stay overseas.

Giant pandas are among the world's most endangered species, with only about 1,600 living in the wild and some 300 in captivity, mostly in China.

China is famed for "panda diplomacy." As friendly ambassadors, 23 giant pandas were sent as state gifts to nine countries from 1953 to 1982. Since 1982, giant pandas have no longer been sent as gifts, but loaned out.

China has loaned dozens of pandas to other countries in recent decades, including the US, Thailand, Singapore, Spain, Austria and Japan.

Europe targets Chinese travelers

By Han Manman

The European Travel Commission (ETC) recently launched its official Chinese website to attract more Chinese tourists to the financially shaky continent.

More and more Chinese are traveling abroad for their holidays, reflecting the increasing wealth among the country's fast-expanding middle class, who have benefited from rapid economic growth and a booming property market, Petra Hedorfer, president of ETC, said at the launch of visitEurope.com.cn last week.

However, the vast majority of outbound trips from China are still to Asian destinations, she said.

"With the launch of our new Chinese website, we declare our common initiative to focus on the Chinese market, inviting the people of China to come and discover the wealth of culture and diversity that our beautiful continent has to offer," Hedorfer said.

Figures from ETC show the total number of outbound trips from China reached 15.7 million in 2010, with 24 percent, or 3.8 million, going to European countries. Asia

accounted for 67 percent of China's outbound trips, and the Americas accounted for 8 percent.

Hedorfer said she hopes the website, which provides extensive information on the cuisine, history and culture of 35 European countries, will help boost the number of outbound trips from China to Europe to 8 million by 2030.

The launch of the Chinese website marks the first step in the recently strengthened cooperation between ETC and the European Commission to promote Europe as a travel destination in coming years.

Pedro Ortun, director for Tourism of European Commission, said more needs to be done to attract Chinese tourists. Ortun said the continent needs to improve its Chinese language skills as well as knowledge of Chinese habits in order to attract more Chinese people.

He added that the approval of the Visa Code for the Schengen area and the recent adoption of a harmonized list for supporting documents to be presented by visa applicants in China will certainly help to attract more Chinese visitors.

Commerce & consulates

9

BEIJING TODAY Editor: Han Manman Designer: Zhao Yan

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iWeekend holds successful third event

By Annie Wei

On November 18 and 19, a workshop called iWeekend brought together motivated software developers, business managers, start-up enthusiasts, marketing professionals and graphic artists to turn ideas into Web products.

During the weekend event in Haidian District, select participants gave three-minute pitches for a tech start-up. The audience voted for its favorites.

iWeekend Beijing was initiated last year by 29-year-old Swede Olof Nordenstam and his friends. As an entrepreneur who runs an online Scrabble community, Nordenstam was inspired by a previous iWeekend he attended in Spain in 2009.

WoLaiYe, a holiday trip aggregator, was selected as having the best business plan.

Jason Lim, a technology blogger and one of the participants, shared his experiences with *Beijing Today*.



An iWeekend team at the Beijing workshop get advice from a mentor.

Photo provided by Henry Zheng

WoLaiYe, holiday trip aggregator wins iWeekend

By Jason Lim

Once again, iWeekend showed that the spirit of start-ups and entrepreneurship is hot in Beijing. All the ideas were very different and didn't sound too technical, but hey, entrepreneurship doesn't discriminate!

The winner by votes was WoLaiYe. Led by Xie Lebin, the product is a mobile app for smartphones and tablet computers that allows users to aggregate all content from their holiday trips, such as pictures, reviews, blogs and travel tips, and share them with friends and family.

The idea is similar to one of the pitches at April's iWeekend, by Alex Su, co-founder of TukeQ.

The difference is that TukeQ is for helping people plan trips based on other people's tips.

The voting system was more sophisticated this time because the iWeekend team created an online system to expedite the process. All the teams gave fluid, nice presentations with the help of experienced mentors.

The final message from professionals was that teamwork is more important than the idea itself – it's crucial to

execute on a plan instead of drawing up a fuzzy idea that can easily fade away.

Other notable teams: Initial Momentum

Starting with the finding that 90 percent of start-ups fail within the first five years, this team presented a solution to help start-ups identify and solve weaknesses through an online platform. The platform would allow them to post questions and get feedback and advice from the start-up community and experts, including investors.

They intend to monetize through banner ads for start-up resources such as server racks and marketing services. The future model is to create a virtual place where start-ups and advisors can interact. The basic foundation of this product reminds this reporter of Start-up Genome, which allows start-ups to benchmark themselves and learn from each other.

INpeople

This is an app where people can create a profile to find like-minded and interesting people. The product aims to fill a gap between something as general as Facebook or RenRen and something as specific as LinkedIn. The app is

intended to build a complete profile by knowing who you really are based on keywords you type, behavior, location and education.

Zen Garden

Quite simply, the team wants to create a physical resort that lets people relax. The ideal place for a resort is in a suburban courtyard, mountain or forest. One of the key challenges is defining their position and getting off the ground. Mentors commented that building a resort is capital intensive and requires a lot of planning and resources.

ChiYouPu

When the iWeekend workshop began on Friday, the idea was to create a fruit delivery service tailored to one's specific health condition. Then the idea changed into a one-stop health website that gives people important health-related information about food, exercise and vitamin supplements. The website would also allow users to exchange information to create a community and recommend healthy recipes. The target user is a busy female professional who cares about her appearance and health. Mentors awarded this team with the "Best Team Spirit Award."



CFP Photo

Christmas party for pets and their poeple tomorrow

By Annie Wei

The International Center for Veterinary Services (ICVS) will host a Christmas party for pets and their owners at the center tomorrow from 2 to 4 pm.

Established for eight years, ICVS has aimed to provide an international standard of veterinary medicine to Beijing residents, as well as the latest information about pet ownership in China.

Everyone is welcome to the party, which is not only

a happy gathering for pets and pet owners, but also a networking opportunity for local and foreign veterinarians.

Apart from providing medical care for cats and dogs, ICVS also provides service such as well-care examinations, dentistry, diet and nutrition consultations and general husbandry advice for special species like rabbits, ferrets, chinchillas, guinea pigs, hamsters, birds, turtles and reptiles.

The pets Christmas party

Where: ICVS, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Anjialou, Chaoyang District

When: December 10, 2-4 pm

Tel: 8456 1939

Rent a car this holiday season

By Zhao Hongyi

With Christmas and Spring Festival coming up, many are planning trips outside the city. But why take a train and plane when you can rent a car and drive yourself around?

"Spring Festival is always the hot season for our business," said Zhang Shan, manager of e-Hai Car Service.

Each year, the company leases 95 percent of their vehicles out during the holidays. "Therefore, those who are planning to rent a car during the coming month should reserve a vehicle as early as possible," Zhang said.

During the week of January 21 to 28 - Spring Festival - the rental fee will be marked up four- to five-fold, Zhang said.

Holiday price hikes are common.

"The prices have not yet been calculated," said Zhao Haiyang, manager of China Auto Rental's (CAR) Beijing office. "We'll try to control the increasing prices to compete during this special time."

The company has opened a 24-hour leasing service to ensure customers can choose,

rent and return cars any time each day in its 50 service counters at airports around the country and 30 service centers in nearly all the provincial capital cities.

On December 6, CAR said it would cancel its restrictions on travel distance and charge only based on days used.

"This is the standard practice around the world," Zhao said. "We are trying to follow the world practice and be more competitive in the market."

"I'd like to rent a car to drive around Beijing to see the beautiful snow scenery during the Spring Festival holiday," said Yang Xiaoqin, an office worker.

Other major car rental companies in town include United Crescent, Innovation Car Rental and Voda Car Rental, which are all preparing for the holiday season.

For those who trust the state-owned car rental companies, Beijing Auto Rental and Beijing Taxi Rental are the best choices. Their prices might be higher but their services are more reliable.

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Car rental has become popular as many city residents prefer the freedom of driving to spending time in crowded airports, train stations and bus depots.

CFP Photo

Car rental companies

eHi Car Service

Hotline: 400-888-6608

Website: 1hai.cn

China Auto Rental (CAR)

Hotline: 400-616-666

Website: zuche.com, rentauto.net

United Crescent

Hotline: 13911176886, 5111 1506

Website: bjxylyzc.com

Innovation Car Rental

Hotline: 400-810-9001

Website: bcnc.com.cn

Voda Car Rental

Hotline: 13910010451, 8467 5409

Website: vodaht.com

Beijing Auto Rental

Hotline: 13601266697, 6474 7699

Website: sqswc.com

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By He Jianwei

Modern dance companies worldwide are suffering as countries slash their budgets, but the situation is especially bad in China.

Unlike the dance companies in Europe and the US, those in China are not allocated any money by the government. High rent and low returns have been slowing their development and causing many to close their doors.

But some dancers continue their dreams. Tao Ye, founder of the TAO Dance Theater, has turned his six-dancer company into a competitive force in the world's dance market.

Tao's studio in the northeastern 318 Art Zone is a 30-minute trip from the central business district.

The studio, larger than half a basketball court, includes a rehearsal hall and has been the group's home since earlier this year. It spent the last three years on the move.

Tao, a graduate of Chongqing Dance School, began his career with the Shanghai Army Song and Dance Ensemble before joining the Jia Xing Dance Theater in 2003.

In 2004, he worked with a physical performance company in Shanghai on its first dance production *Tongue's Memory of Home*, inspired by popular poems penned by Shanghai poets born in the 1980s.

He went on to perform with many major dance companies, including Beijing Modern Dance Company between 2006 and 2008. But in March 2008, Tao, then 23, decided it was time to found his own theater.

He said it was restricting to dance for major companies, and that he wanted to create and develop his own language of dance. "Every time I wanted to leave a company, I felt like a part of boiled water about to evaporate. I needed a place that could inspire my creativity," Tao said.

Money was not the problem when he decided to run his own studio. Dancing at a major company was stable, but the pay was

very low. "For Chinese dancers, working for a major company can never bring in enough to live on. Can you imagine living in Beijing on only 1,500 to 2,000 yuan each month?" he said.

He said his toughest time in Shanghai was when he left the Shanghai Army Song and Dance Ensemble: he had only 0.7 yuan — enough for a hard-boiled egg.

While he was worrying about his next meal, he suddenly landed a new job. "That was when I realized that God would not allow anybody to die of starvation," he said.

In August, Duan Ni, who previously worked with the Akram Khan Dance Company in London, joined Tao's theater.

Early on, they were unable to secure a rehearsal room and would practice in the basement of a friend's home or after hours in a gallery.

They once rented a rehearsal room in Zhuzhou, Hebei Province. They spent about six hours on the road commuting each day. "We rented it because its floor was suitable for dancing, and more importantly it was cheap," Tao said.

Most of his early works were presented in galleries; his TAO Dance Theater presented *Do Beauty* at Parcour Galerie in Nanjing Xiang in April 2008.

Tao said the rent of a theater capable of seating 800 costs 30,000 yuan per hour. The price does not include the cost of

Festivals key to dance company's success



Photo by Matthew G. Johnson

lighting, stage designing and ticketing. Typically the theater and ticketing agent take 10 to 15 percent of the returns for each ticket.

In 2009, Tao and his dancers performed at Oriental Pioneer Theater, which admits fewer than 400 people. Tao participated in every process during the performance, from choreography to marketing.

They lost a small amount of money on the performances and ended up exhausted. "The future of our studio would have been bleak if we kept performing that way," he said.

Instead, Tao began to focus on dance festivals.

That helped us avoid money problems. If we are invited by international dance festivals, they provide us with a ticketing agent and accommodations. They also pay us to perform," he said.

Since its founding, the studio has attended every dance festival on the mainland, including Beijing Modern Dance Week, which promotes communication between young domestic troupes and those in Europe and the Americas.

Tao's TAO Dance Theater performed in Amsterdam and Antwerp, Belgium. It has been invited to perform at next year's American Dance Festival. The last company from the Chinese mainland to receive an invite was the Guangdong Modern Dance Company — 13 years ago.

Next year, it will also perform at the Lincoln Center for the

Performing Arts in New York.

"Some Chinese companies have performed at the center, but most of them rented the space on their own. We are the first dance troupe from the mainland to receive an invitation," he said.

Besides creating and performing, Tao said one of the company's targets was to promote modern dance among Chinese viewers. From March to December 2008, Tao hosted free dance workshops every Sunday at Pengtiao Theater and Fuxing Theater Village.

"I started the workshop when I founded my studio as a way to test the dance atmosphere in Beijing. To my surprise, more than 1,000 people have attended my workshop during the past four years," he said. "Our aim is not to train professional modern dancers. We hope people will broaden their thinking through dance."

Tao is optimistic about the future of his studio, but he is pessimistic about the situation of modern dance in China. Only four years ago, it was much easier to find a ticket to attend a dance performance.

"When I was a child, I did not have a chance to see a professional performance. The cost has skyrocketed in the past four years," he said. "The new generation of young dancers will care more about their life and material temptations than we did."

"I do expect a bright future for modern dance in China, but the dancers will face a much tougher time."



A workshop by Tao Ye, founder of TAO Dance Theater



Tao hosts a workshop at the Ullens Center for Performing Art. Photo provided by UCCA



Photo by Matthew G. Johnson



Photos provided by Tao Ye

Letters reveal a more complex Hemingway

By Charles Zhu

Fans who have long been awaiting the chance to take a voyeuristic look into the mind of one of the 20th century's greatest writers will be thrilled with *The Letters of Ernest Hemingway: Volume 1, 1907-1922*.

The volume includes a detailed introduction, notes, a chronology and illustrations from his early years, including his combat experience in World War I and bohemian life in Paris.

The Hemingway letters, acquired recently by Penn State, provide an intimate view of the writer behind the mysterious curtain.

"Almost no one outside the family had seen these letters," said Sandra Spanier, a professor of English and general editor of the Hemingway Letters Project. "They were in the possession of Madeline's son, Ernest Hemingway Mainland, in Petoskey, Michigan. He had sold a few pieces over the years, so I knew of the collection's existence."

Spanier visited him in the fall of 2004 to talk about the letters. After seeing a third of the collection, Spanier returned to Penn State to tell the Dean of Libraries, Nancy Eaton and Bill Joyce, "There's something really extraordinary here that you might be interested in seeing."

In November 2006, she and Joyce went to Petoskey and spent a whole Sunday, side by side at a long table, reading the drama that unfolds from letter to letter.

But these letters were never meant to be made public. In his letter to his executors, Hemingway wrote, "I hereby request and direct you not to publish, or consent to the publication by others, of any such letters."

The current edition is the first of a twelve-volume scholarly edition of the writer's letters to be published by Cambridge University Press. The collection of more than 100 unpublished letters, notes and telegrams was written primarily to his parents and sister Madeline Hemingway, and postmarked in places such as Milan, Key West, Pamplona, Bimini and Cuba. The collection spans 40 years of Hemingway's life.

The letters expose a more complex person than Hemingway's "tough guy" public image. He was a devoted son and brother, a perfect lover, a considerate husband, an animated friend and a responsible writer.

The letters record Hemingway as an artist and offer glimpses into his process of novel writing, and record his own frank appraisals of his works and his fellow writers' and give accounts of events and relationships that profoundly shaped his life and work.

The letters described his boyhood fishing trips in Michigan that are very similar to his early Nick Adams stories and artillery wounds in World War I that predated *Farewell to Arms*.

In a letter to his mother in July 1924, Hemingway described the San Ferman bullfighting festival in Pam-

plona, Spain: "It is a purely Spanish fiesta ... and there are practically no foreigners." Two years later he published a novel set in Pamplona.

Among the letters were also those of courtship addressed to his first wife Hadley. As gossip, he wrote of the Paris literary scene to Sherwood Anderson: "Gertrude Stein and me are just like brothers ... Joyce has a most goddam wonderful look ... I have been teaching Pound to box with little success."

Ernest Hemingway wrote, "All my life I've looked at words as though I were seeing them for the first time." That unusual attention to linguistics and his precise narrative style made him one of the most iconic figures in 20th century American literature.

From his beginnings in upper-class Oak Park, Illinois in 1899 to his death by suicide in 1961, Hemingway's life was adventurous and dramatic. He was wounded by mortar shells in World War I; narrowly escaped death during the Spanish Civil War; was on the verge of death because of blood poisoning while

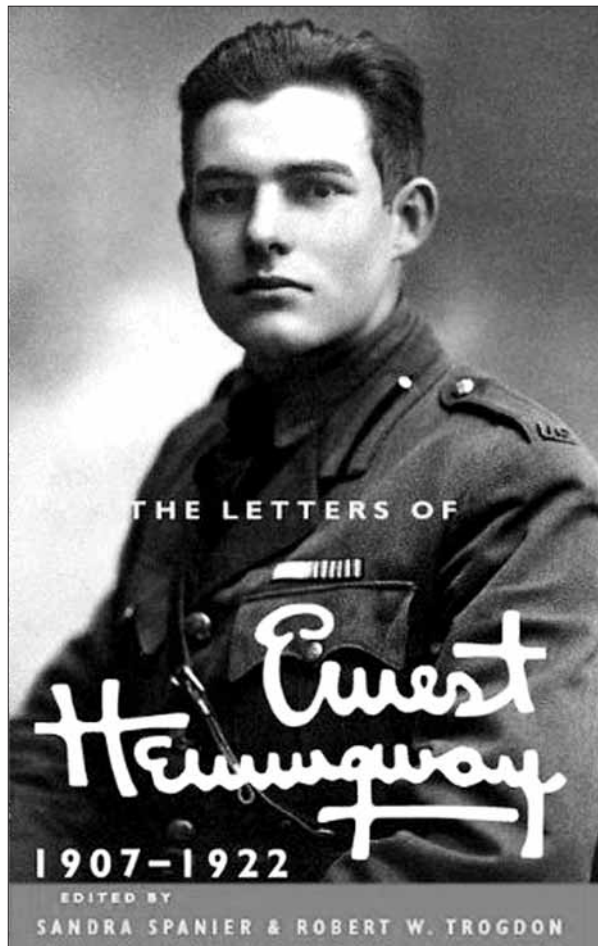
on safari in Africa; and survived two plane crashes.

The white-bearded, broad-shouldered tough "Papa" Hemingway had an immense zeal for drinks, hunting, fishing, boxing and bullfighting.

There are some rather surprising letters in the collection, such as one in which Hemingway wrote "This is private and confidential," and went on to tell his sister that he was about to divorce his first wife, Hadley. Though Hemingway was a Nobel laureate, his religious Midwestern parents found the themes of his early works morbid and vulgar, and even returned copies of his books sent to them by his publisher.

The letters reveal that his fiction was closely tied to actual places and persons. The readers come to know him from his stories of protagonists that were very much like him, doing things in places he really lived, and the characters were very much like his family and friends.

Though as one critic said, "This is unfortunate, though, because it kills – or at least weakens – the power of his fiction, limits how we think of it."

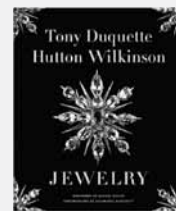


The Letters of Ernest Hemingway: Volume 1, 1907-1922

By Ernest Hemingway, edited by Sandra Spanier and Robert W. Trogon, 516pp, Cambridge University Press, 390 yuan

Trends Lounge book listing

Located at The Place, Trends Lounge is a bookstore and cafe with a wide selection of books about international art, design and architecture.



Tony Duquette / Hutton Wilkinson Jewelry

By Hutton Wilkinson and Stephanie Hanchett, 144pp, Abrams, \$50

This collection presents the most spectacular, jaw-dropping pieces created by both artists. Their belief that "more is more" is reflected in 18-karat gold designs that are dripping with precious and semiprecious stones that recall the style of Renaissance kings, Chinese emperors and maharajas.



George Harrison: Living in the Material World

By Olivia Harrison, 400pp, Abrams, \$40

Drawing on George Harrison's personal archive of photographs, letters, diaries and memorabilia, Olivia Harrison reveals his life from a guitar-obsessed boyhood in Liverpool to the astonishing success of his Beatles years, his days as an independent musician and as a bohemian squire.



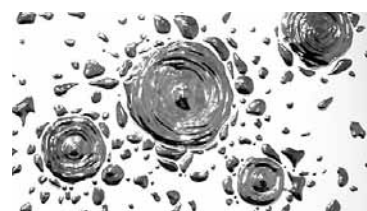
Impressions from South Africa: 1965 to Now

By Judith Hecker, 96pp, MoMa, \$29.95

This collection features prints by John Muafangejo and Dan Rakgoathe, whose vigorous, metaphoric linoleum cuts were cultivated at Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre in the 1960s and 1970s. It also shows the many posters produced for anti-apartheid coalitions in the 1980s, and the political works of Sue Williamson, Norman Catherine and William Kentridge, representing several periods of apartheid resistance.

(By He Jianwei)

Modern art with feng shui principles



By He Jianwei

Many Chinese people believe manipulating feng shui – especially in the home – can bring good fortune. The young artist Tang Yuhuan adopts the principles of feng shui in her “blessing” sculptures and installations designed for her parents’ new house.

On November 26, she brought her works to the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art as part of a solo exhibition titled Interior Divination.

Tang offers a “sculptural blessing” for her family, a loving tribute to her mother and father, and a meditation on superstition and tradition in a modern age.

Tang Yuhuan creates sculptures and installations using feng shui principles to decorate her parents’ new house.

Photos provided by UCCA

A large geomantic compass marks the entrance to Tang Yuhuan’s solo exhibition. The compass has a long history of use by feng shui practitioners to divine the direction of energies.

The first exhibit is a small room with Tang’s notes about the principles of feng shui and early sketches of her creations.

Tang began creating her sculptures two years ago, during her second year of graduate study at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

At that time, her parents moved into a new house and her mother asked her to make a sculpture to decorate the home. “My mother always said that the house didn’t look like one that produced an artist, because I never made any pieces for my family. However, I was sick of making handicrafts,” she said.

Tang’s mother, an avid believer in feng shui, hired a consultant to advise her on how to decorate the home before moving in. “I saw the move as a chance to create something new that incorporated the concepts of feng shui,” Tang said.

The first piece she made was a wall of water drops on stainless steel to hang on the north wall of the living room. “According to the principles of feng shui, water means wealth, and the north direction is in charge of wealth,” she said.

The room is divided into nine squares and each direction has each function. For instance, the southwest is in charge of emotional living. Tang hopes her parents have a sweet and long love, so she spliced together photos of her parents’ palms so that the palms’ “heart lines” became linked.

According to palmistry, the heart line, which is read as

starting from the edge of the palm under the little finger and flowing across the palm towards the thumb, represents one’s emotional living.

“Traditional feng shui consultants may ask you to put some ancient sculptures in different corners, but I wanted to create new works,” she said. “As a young person, I think feng shui is interesting and follows strict logical rules. But it is largely connected to ancient art. Ancient people invented a lot of mythical animals, such as the pixiu and qilin, and used them in feng shui to produce exquisite works.”

Tang said these ideas were easily accepted by her parents. “Many people complain that it is hard to comprehend contemporary art because it is so disconnected with their lives. When I created these sculptures, I was designing something that I hoped would be close to their lives.”



Tang Yuhuan

“As a young person, I think feng shui is interesting and follows a strict logic rules. But it is largely connected to ancient art. Ancient people invented a lot of mythical animals, such as the pixiu and qilin, and used them in feng shui to produce exquisite works.”

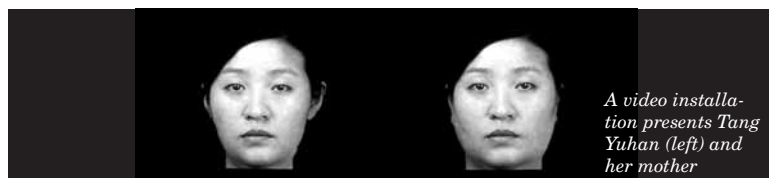
Interior Divination – Tang Yuhuan Solo Exhibition

Where: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 10, 2012, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: 15 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Tel: 8459 9269



A video installation presents Tang Yuhuan (left) and her mother

Get your hair ready for the party season

By Ammie Wei

December is the month to prepare for themed parties. That doesn't just mean buying costumes: for a truly fabulous getup, go for the head-to-toe makeover.

This week, *Beijing Today* shows you where you can find accessories for your hair.



Repit hair curler, 500 yuan

Many people worry they will burn their hands using a hair curler. Repit has a special design to avoid that, and it's available at Rich salon.



En foret

A professional brand using natural ingredients, En Foret has special shampoos for hair loss (208 yuan), dandruff (188 yuan) and oily hair (188 yuan), and offers a size for the family (300 yuan).

To make your hair shiny and healthy, try its hair power vital treatment (298 yuan), nourishing moisture mask (118 yuan) and nourishing cuticle essence (168 yuan).



Kerastase for colored hair shampoo (190 yuan), musk (365 yuan) and serum (285 yuan)

These French cosmetic products remain a global leader. Kerastase and Phyto design shampoos, conditioners and serums for different hair types. You might not feel an instant result, but your hair will gradually look different after sustained use.



Rich shampoo (80 yuan) and conditioner (80 yuan)

Many people who have visited South Korea are impressed by the local women's skin and hair quality. "Their facial skin is fine, clear and without pores, and their hair is smooth and shiny," said Tian Yufeng, a former photographer.

More than 20 percent of South Korean vegetables and fruits are organic, and the people there adore products made of natural ingredients.

The brand claims all products are made of natural ingredients. Tian said he has been using the products for a while and likes its gentle and light scent. "Unlike many other brands full of strong aromas, I think these are more natural and comfortable."



Paul Mitchell slick works (220 yuan) or hard-hold hairspray (173 yuan)

They are available in many hair salons and beauty retailers like Sephora.

Photos by Tian Yufeng

Special treatment or styling

A good haircut can make you feel like a new person, but it probably takes a few days for you to get used to the look. It may be better to see a stylist a week or two before the big party if you want a truly special look.

A hair salon chain in South Korea, Rich, has a flagship store in Beijing that has been open for four years. It not only provides basic haircuts from 118 yuan, but offers hair treatments for thinning hair, dandruff and oily hair (starting from 2,000 yuan for four times).

"The treatment for anti-dandruff and oily hair is effective, but the

results of the hair-loss treatment aren't as obvious," said Lee Jin Kyung, salon manager. "Effective" may be a more accurate way to put it, because many factors contribute to hair loss, such as genetics and hormonal imbalance.

The salon also provides hair styling (starting from 120 yuan for iron-dry) for various occasions.

Before January 22, 2012, Chinese New Year, any customer who gets a coloring or perm service will get a free gift bag of Rich shampoo and conditioner. Some services will be marked 50 percent off.

Where to shop:

Rich Professional Hair Salon

Where: L315, North building of The Place, 9 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm
Tel: 6587 1369

Shin-Kong Plaza

Where: 87 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm
Tel: 6533 1536

Traditional dishes, but with surprises

By Annie Wei

This week, *Beijing Today* recommends a Thai restaurant that offers bigger servings but lower prices, and cozy Modo's new winter dishes.



Tom yum soup, 26 yuan

CFP Photos



Thai lime steamed fish, 138 yuan

Taishange: refreshing, authentic Thai at good prices

By Annie Wei

Those who ask recommendations for Thai restaurants will usually get the same two or three established restaurants that everyone knows.

But if you're out for quality Thai at lower prices, try Taishange, opened earlier this year.

Lin Ziming, a Chinese Thai, spent more than 30 years living in Thailand before marrying a Beijing woman and starting his business in the capital.

All Thai restaurants offer traditional dishes such as prawn tom yum with coconut milk, curry prawn or crab, chicken satay and prawn or fish cakes, and Taishange is no exception.

A taste of tom yum soup

(26 yuan for small and 98 yuan for big serving) will tell you right away that Lin knows his Thai food: it offers a great balance of sweet and sour, and is full of various kinds of Thai herbal aromas. If you don't like spicy, ask for the chicken and coconut milk soup (79 yuan), which is creamy and flavorful.

Lin's chef is from Thailand and makes sure all dishes are prepared in the same way as they would be back home.

For starters, we always love the papaya salad (32 yuan), but Lin said the winter isn't a good season for green papaya. He suggested rice vermicelli salad mixed with black fungus and coriander

(28 yuan), which tastes cool, full of Thai spices and lime, and delicious.

The restaurant's mixed fried platter (68 yuan) includes deep fried fish patties, shrimp patties and fried marinated chicken wrapped in pandanus leaf, and is popular. The fried shrimp patty is crispy on the outside, tender on the inside. The dipping sauce is also good, a bit spicy, sweet and sour. You can taste the sourness from the freshly homemade plums.

Taishanfang serves the biggest shrimps in town for its curry-fried shrimp (138 yuan for six pieces), which cannot be found at any other restaurant in town.

The restaurant offers simple lunch choices as well, such as the pineapple seafood fried rice (49 yuan). Although the dish is normally served in a real pineapple, Lin said a pineapple is too small and many customers have complained it holds too little rice, so he serves the rice on a plate – enough for two people.

The rice is fried and mixed with southern sausage, shrimps and mussels.

Lin said in Thailand, two dishes are especially popular: the tom yum soup and the steamed fish. Both use a lot of Thai limes that give out a distinct lime flavor and tartness.

To keep the dishes authentic, Lin uses fresh materials,

and all herbs are shipped from Thailand twice a week.

"You cannot replace the herbs," Lin said. Thai lime, for example, has a strong flavor that local limes can't imitate.

The restaurant has become a popular spot for its convenient location, underground at The Place, with decorations in mellow gold and mahogany, and splendid Thai artwork. During lunch hours, it's cramped with office workers. In the evenings, Thai people working in Beijing occupy most tables.

Taishange

Where: 142, B1, The Place, 9 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6587 1525



Cherry tomatoes and olive sauce, and salmon rillette



Country-style pate



Self-service wine machine at Modo

Photos by Sun Xiaoping

Modo introduces more Mediterranean options

By Annie Wei

After opening last year, Modo quickly became a go-to place for its creative dishes, wine selection and cozy yet modern ambiance.

Earlier this week, chef Daniel Urdaneta updated Modo's winter menu to give it more Mediterranean flair.

Customers are encouraged to order several small plates as starters to share with friends.

We tried its Mediterranean confit with cherry tomatoes and olive sauce and Campesino bread (195 yuan). The salmon rillette is a European staple made of salmon, butter, fat, salt and lemon juice, and is a richer and more tasteful way of eating salmon. Meanwhile, the tomato salsa adds a freshness and fruity flavor to the dish.

The country-style pate is what Urdaneta personally loves. It's a mix of pork and chicken, smooth and rich in flavor and texture.

For main dishes, we tried the braised sea bass (138 yuan). The fish was served in an iron cast cocotte pot, like the stone pot rice in Korean restaurants. Such a container lets the dish express all its flavor.

We also tried the red wine braised chicken (128 yuan) with saffron and brie risotto and baby carrots, which comes in a big portion. The chicken is done *conque au vin*, meaning it's cooked a long time at a low temperature in wine sauce.

The highlight of dining in Modo is you can match each dish with a different wine. Diners can buy a wine card and use it at the restaurant's self-

service Enomatic machines, which dispense wine.

The machine uses an inert gas preservation system that keeps the wine's flavor and character for three weeks.

Modo has two machines that offer 16 wines. The restaurant said it selected wines from all over the world, and the selection frequently changes.

Each wine can be dispensed in three amounts: 15 milliliters (starting from 15 yuan), 75 milliliters (half-glass) and 150 milliliters (whole glass).

Modo

Where: 3rd floor, South Sanlitun Village shopping mall, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: Noon – 10:30 pm, and later for drinks

Tel: 6415 7207

Combining ethnic style with rock



Cover of debut album

By He Jianwei

Yunnan Province is home to 25 ethnic minorities and is famous for its ethnic music. Most forms have been labeled national intangible cultural heritage. Naxi music, for instance, originated in the 13th century and is considered a living fossil.

A folk rock band from Yunnan called Shanren is trying to preserve the diverse heritage of the many ethnic groups through original compositions and rearrangements of folk melodies.

In the past decade, they have performed at many festivals, but have produced only one full-length album: they believe that the best music is always live. They'll give music lovers in Beijing a chance to see for themselves when they perform live next Friday at Mao Livehouse.



Xiao Bu Dian performs lusheng



Shanren Band performing at Folk Music on the Road last year in Shanghai's Mao Livehouse.

CFP Photo

Shanren means "mountain people," a fitting name for a group that believes its music takes root in the mountainous regions of their home province.

Vocalist Qu Zihan, of the Yi ethnic minority, first formed the band with drummer Ou Jianyun in Kunming, Yunnan Province in 2000. Two others joined later. The members of Shanren come from the Han, Wa, Yi and Buyi ethnic groups.

They blend indigenous music in Yunnan with rock, reggae and ska, a Jamaican style created in the late 1950s, and perform with a mix of weird instruments.

Qu plays xianzi, a stringed instrument of the Yi that was first used during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), according to a music book from that period. The instrument has three forms: the two-stringed, three-stringed and four-stringed.

It plays an important role in the life of Yi people. Men play it while singing courtship songs, and women sing and dance to the instrument's music at traditional festivals.

Another stringed instrument the band plays is the qinqin, which is similar to the banjo and dates back to the Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD).

The band hopes the use of traditional instruments can inject new life into the Chinese rock scene.

Although the band uses uncon-

ventional instruments, its simple lyrics reflect their observation of modern life.

The song "Giving the Money Back" depicts a story of asking for repayment. Money often tests friendships. It's hard to stay friendly with someone who borrows money and never returns it, but those who don't lend money are considered miserly.

Money is a popular subject for many Chinese musicians, such as rock star Xu Xiaoxiao Zuzhou, who sings in "The Song of Money": "If you loan money to friends, you will lose your money and your friends; if you do not loan it, you will lose your friends and your money."

Shanren's song is a dialogue between a man who borrows money and his creditor, reflecting both parties' dilemmas.

In another song, "Thirty Years," the band focuses on rural people who seek a future in the cities far from their homeland, comparing what it was like to look for employment and love 30 years ago to what it is like now.

Shanren has become an ambassador for ethnic diversity in Chinese music. Last year, they performed at the Barcelona Festival Asia 2010, and "Thirty Years" was made the official song of this year's festival. In January, they were invited to the ReedMidem World Music in Cannes.



Ai Yong

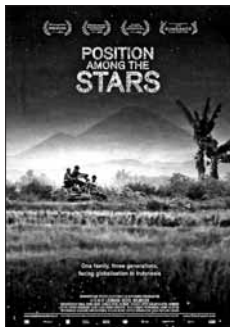
Shanren Band Concert

Where: MAO Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: December 16, 9:30 pm
Admission: 50 yuan advance purchase, 60 yuan at the door
Tel: 6402 5080

“The most astonishing thing is that neither the cemetery nor its archives were destroyed.”

iDOCS to screen documentary collection



Position Among the Stars

Against a backdrop of rising Islamic fundamentalism and increasing globalization, three generations of an Indonesian family are torn between traditional values and urban pressure to prosper.

This is director Leonard Retel Helmrich's third film about hard-working Christian grandmother Rumidjah and her family. Her non-observant Muslim son Bakti's sole business aspiration centers on gambling and fighting fish. The family's only hope of escaping poverty rests on granddaughter Tari, but she cares more about acquiring the latest cell phone.

Retel Helmrich's revolutionary cinematography immerses the viewer in the rich textures of their lives: long takes glide fluidly through moments saturated with meaning.



In Heaven Underground

To the north of Berlin, tucked away in a residential area surrounded by walls, is a jungle of trees, rhododendrons and ivy. In between the foliage are thousands of stones.

Weißensee is the largest Jewish cemetery still in use in Europe. It is so large that it could contain approximately eighty-six soccer fields. The cemetery offers a walk through history, its headstone a record of some of Europe's most famous artists, philosophers, lawyers, architects, doctors and publishers. Few are aware that the protected area will officially be listed as one of UNESCO's world heritage withing a few years.

The Weißensee cemetery is entering its 130th year of use. It has never been closed, and as such represents one of the few German properties to remain in Jewish hands even under Nazi rule. The most astonishing thing is that neither the cemetery nor its archives were destroyed — making it a real find for collectors of stories.

By Zhao Hongyi

iDOCS International Documentary Forum is China's officially recognized platform for the exchange of international documentary films.

Now in its third year, the five-day forum will open on December 12. A masters' podium, themed discussions and documentary screening will be the major events.

This year, the forum will add two new programs: TrailerPark and Doc Library. TrailerPark will enable visitors to see the clips

from the documentaries collected by the forum each year, while Doc Library will give fans the chance to learn more about the entire catalog of films selected by iDOCS.

This year's 22 documentaries include selections from the UK, US, Finland, Australia, Germany, Holland and Canada.

Forum guests include Pirjo Honkasalo, the Finnish director of *The Three Rooms of Melancholia*, Bob Connolly, the Australian director of *Facing the Music*, Leonard Retel Helmrich, the German direc-

tor of *Position Among the Stars*, Danniël Danniël, the Dutch director of *Forever*, and Larry Weinstein, the Canadian director of *Inside Hana's Suitcase*.

Aside from academic study and research, the forum has become known as a place for students to improve their skill in shooting documentary film.

Most of shows, forums and discussions will be held at the Beijing Film Academy. Visitors can learn more at idocs.cn, the official website.



The Three Rooms of Melancholia

This film is set against the backdrop of the Chechen War. The inability of adults to bring an end to the conflict gives rise to a generation raised on hate. The emotion permeates the children's minds, and it will accompany them throughout their lives. For most, the hate manifests as an inexplicable melancholia and sudden outbursts of rage.

The director filmed Chechen children in Ingushetia, primarily those in the family of Khadzizhat Gataeva, who acts as a mother to some 75 orphans she saved from the ruins of a devastated Grozny. All the children's parents were killed by the Russians.

Inside Hana's Suitcase

The delivery of a battered suitcase to Fumiko Ishioka at the Tokyo Holocaust Museum begins the true-life mystery that became the subject of Karen Levine's bestselling book *Hana's Suitcase*. The suitcase came from the Auschwitz museum and had Hana Brady's name roughly painted on it.

Larry Weinstein's masterful film follows Fumiko's search to discover the details of Hana's life, which leads to the discovery of her brother George in Toronto. As small children they had been incarcerated after the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939. A superb musical score by Alexina Louie and Alex Pauk, coupled



with dramatic re-enactments shot by Horst Zeidler, drives the power of the tragedy straight into the viewer's heart.

The voices of children from Japan, Canada and the Czech Republic telling Hana's story are woven into the drama, along with George's memories and Fumiko's quest to create a film of astonishing power and hope.

One Lucky Elephant

Where does an elephant go after a life in the circus?

Sixteen years have passed since circus producer David Balding adopted Flora, an orphaned baby African elephant he raised as part of his family and the star of his show. As Flora approaches adulthood, he realizes that she is not happy performing. Ultimately, David must face the difficult truth that the circus is no place for Flora.



However, the road to Flora's retirement is difficult and tests their bond in unexpected ways. Ten years in the making, *One Lucky Elephant* explores the consequences of keeping wild animals in captivity.

Explore the mysteries of the stone village

By Charles Zhu

Travelers searching for a village in Ming Dynasty architectural style have long known to head to Shijiazhuang, capital of neighboring Hebei Province.

But for a special experience, one should aim for the 500-year-old village Yujiacun (Yu Family Village).

Located in Jingxing County, west of Shijiazhuang, it's tucked away in the Taihang Mountains. Its beauty and elegance derives from its building blocks: stones and more stones, of all different shapes, sizes and colors.

The Yu family tree can be traced back to Yu Qian, a famous Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) minister and general who led royal troops in defending Beijing against Mongolian invaders in 1449 during the reign of Emperor Zhengtong.

Emperor Jingtai sentenced Yu to death in 1457, but with the help of a eunuch, his second son, Yu Guang, escaped to hide in the mountains of Jingxing County.

Yu Guang settled in Nanyu Village and gave birth to three sons, the eldest of whom, Yu Youdao, moved his father's village in 1486 to its current location in order to be "in the company of stones, trees, pigs and deer."

The Yu family is currently in its 24th generation.

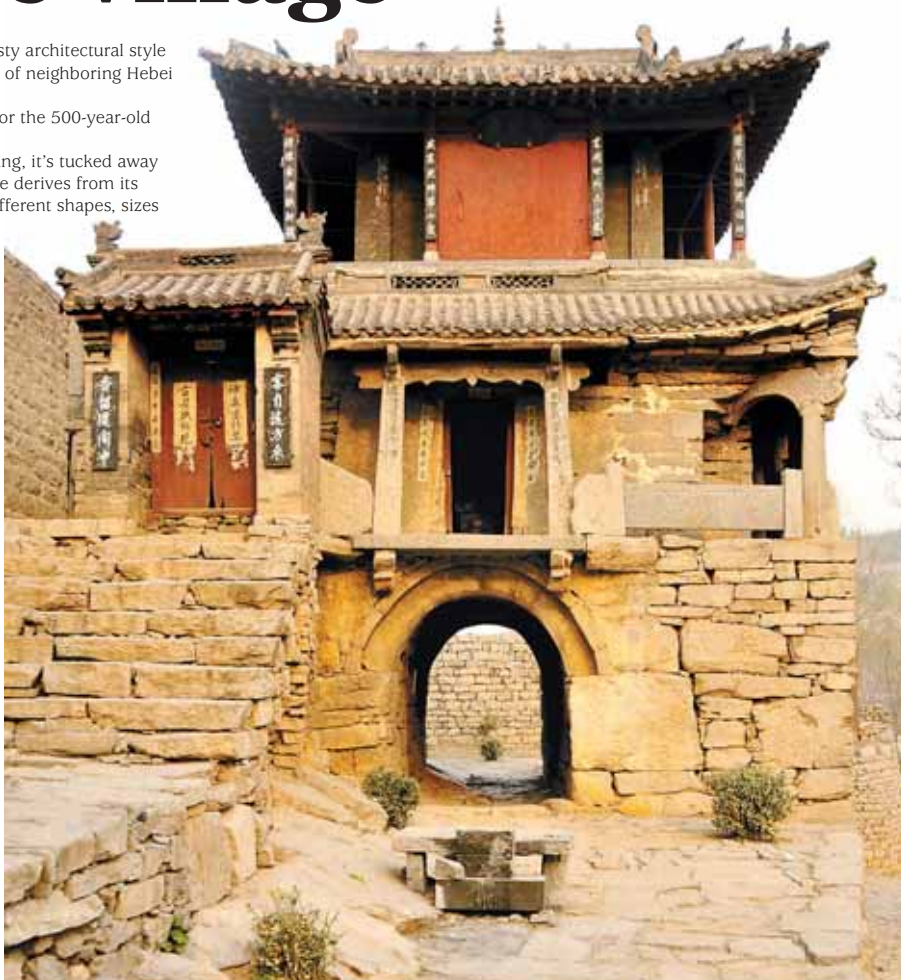
Most of the villagers are masons who use local stones to make houses, theaters, wells, roads and even utensils. It's said that a dozen people from the family passed the imperial examinations at the county level during the Ming and Qing dynasties, a significant achievement in ancient times.

The village consists of crisscrossing and zigzagging streets, alleys and dead ends. The streets generally have a width of three to four meters, while the alleys are two to three meters wide. There are 3.7 kilometers of roads here, all made of stone. Along the sides are several stone gate towers and caves built in harmony with the countryside.

Farmers and draught animals like horses walk languidly on these paths, made glassy over hundreds of years of use.

The most magnificent of the buildings in the village is the Si He Lou Yuan, literally translated as "a courtyard with a tower." The structure comprises a hundred houses and has a stone base of nearly 1 square kilometer.

It was built during the late Ming. The yard is divided into an eastern and western half, descending magnificently from the north to the south in line with the mountainous topography. If you stand in the corridor, which features huge columns in front of the main hall on the second floor of the main house, you will get a perfect bird's eye view of the southern base of the mountain. The rooms that lie west of the yard are for farmhands.



The entrance to the "stone village"



Decorative Buddhist gods



A corner of the village
CFP Photos



A temple yard



Stone roads in the village



Stone tools



A museum in the village

CFP Photos



The village's name is carved into a stone tablet at the entrance.

The village abounds in Buddhist and Daoist temple culture. A storied landmark is the three-story Qingliangge tower at the eastern entrance of the village. It is also called the Tower of Fairies. It has shrines for the worship of legendary gods such as the Jade Emperor, the Bodhisattva of mercy Guanyin, and Liu Bei, Guan Gong and Zhang Fei, three warriors during the Three Kingdoms period (220-265).

Construction began in 1581 during the reign of Wanli Emperor. It was originally going to be seven stories, but Yu Xichun, a man of unusual strength who made himself responsible for all the work, injured his arms during construction.

The project had to stop with the second floor after 25 years of planning and building. It's said that people can still see blood on the stone slabs on the ground. A third story, made of brick and wood, was added much later.

Outside, on a stone tablet with a gold carving of the town's name, there is a picture of two kids holding a deer. Interestingly, the tablet quivers in breezes but stands still in strong winds.

West of the tower is a theater, which locals call the "song tower," where operas and songs are performed.

At the middle of the village is a Daoist temple built during the reign of the Jiajing Emperor

of the Ming Dynasty in the 16th century, standing like a giant on a stone foundation with 15 stone steps. In its yard is an octagonal stone incense burner, with a verse carved on each side.

The villagers worship the God of Earth, so every household has a stone shrine dedicated to him.

Visitors are welcome to lodge at villagers' homes and dine with them: don't miss the special handmade wheat noodles made from sweet potato flour.

Getting to Yujia Village:

Take a train to Shijiazhuang, which takes about two and a half hours. Then take Bus 203 to Jingxing County and transfer to Yujia Village, which takes two hours.

Admission: 20 yuan

Seven Christmas party themes you haven't thought of yet

Want to have a holly, jolly good time this holiday season? Anyone who isn't a Scrooge or Grinch is likely getting invited to a dozen office parties, family gatherings and other merry celebrations.

So, how will people set theirs apart from the rest?

These quirky party ideas are sure to have everyone bringing their yuletide best to your door.

The ugly sweater party

If someone managed to go this long in life without acquiring some horrific Christmas sweater – the ones with the puff paint snowmen and the mistletoe-patterned mock turtlenecks – from great aunt Mildred, then they may have to run to the nearest market to purchase one for this party of holiday fashion faux pas.

Such sweaters usually cost less than 150 yuan, and the photos of the night will most definitely be priceless.

The Ugly Sweater Party tradition is popular among college students and never seems to get old. Anything from the early '80s will probably work, as long as it's hideous by today's standards. Complete the look with acid or stone-washed jeans, white trainers and a terry headband or wristband.

Play cheesy Christmas music and make sure the eggnog is flowing



Marshmallow roast

Roasting marshmallows around a campfire or a crackling fireplace is a wonderful winter pastime. Just stock up on chocolate bars and graham crackers. Prepare some peppermint schnapps to wash them down. Spend the night getting roasted and toasted.

If people want to kick their mallow roast up a notch, get some chestnuts roasting on that open fire, too.



Cast-off gift exchange

Re-gifting – the act of handing off one of people's previously received unwanted gifts to someone else – may be considered tacky in some circles. But not when everyone is doing it.

Have all your friends bring a Christmas cast-off – something like a leopard-print Snuggie,



Nightmare before Christmas

Take inspiration from the movie and create a slightly creepy, slightly weird Christmas party theme. People can come dressed as any of the characters from the film, or in Gothic costume.

The invitations should have an insert with pictures and names of the characters for those who have never seen the film.

an automatic-twirling spaghetti fork or a hot-pink clip-on tie.

Make sure everyone's gifts are wrapped and play a version of "White Elephant," where people can pick from the pile or steal someone else's new acquisition.

The cookie swap

Nothing says the holidays like binge-eating on homemade cookies in the shapes of Christmas trees and gingerbread men. To make sure people get a variety of sugary goodness this year, host a cookie swap where everyone brings a batch of a homemade specialty, from fudge brownies to cin-

The outfits are pretty easy to replicate. Jack Skellington wears a suit and a little white and black makeup. Sally wears rags stitched together. Outfits require very little skill to look utterly creative. Buy an "axe through the head" hat from a party shop and paint your face green to become Behemoth.

Christmas through the decades

Every decade has introduced its own stylistic nuances into popular fashion, and each decade's distinct flavor is familiar. Decade parties are always fun and gives people a huge range to work with when choosing costumes. Most people have

a pair of bell bottoms lying around. It's easy to turn a modern wardrobe into an '80s outfit with some hair-spray and blue eyeshadow.

Choose only a handful of decades – say '20s, '50s, '70s and '80s. This way, when people blur the lines of the '60s and '70s, at least everyone will know which decade they were going for – this helps put people in groups for games and raffles and competitions for Best Dressed from each decade.

Play music for each decade as the party progresses. For example, play '20s jazz and big band as people are arriving, then '50s rockabilly, '60s rock and some '70s funk and soul.

easy to look gorgeous in all white with a white tie, white feather boa and a touch of glitter.

A big plastic white Christmas tree makes a great Christmas centerpiece for home parties and can sit in the foyer or entrance at bigger events. If the tree is full enough, people don't need to decorate it at all. If it looks sparse, stick with white or silver decorations. But remember, less is more.

When decorating the room, people can use plenty of glitter, tinsel and sequins to make the room shimmer and sparkle. Candles make gorgeous centerpieces.

(Agencies)



White Christmas

The classic "White Christmas" party theme is always in style.

People love the opportunity to wear a white suit jacket or dress, and it's

Hotel



Marriott International unveils app for hotel booking

You and your smartphone need a vacation.

Marriott International is announcing the perfect travel companion to make it easier than ever to plan and book your next hotel stay wherever you are. Marriott has launched a new mobile app for iPhone and Android with a simplified Chinese user interface.

Don't have a smartphone? No problem. Marriott also launched its new "app-like" mobile website for China that can be accessed from any Web-enabled mobile device. It even supports taps and swipes for navigation.

To download the free app, visit marriott.com/mobile.

The new Marriott Mobile tools enable time-crunched travelers to quickly find nearby hotels, book a room, check their upcoming reservations and get details about their hotel, including photos. With the app and mobile website, travelers can also enroll in Marriott Rewards, check their point balance and find out what's happening in the local area.

Since September of this year, Marriott's mobile website has been averaging nearly 3.1 million visits a month and \$24.8 million in property-level revenue – more than three times the volume of the same time period from the year before. Apps are the next natural extension to fuel Marriott International's rapid online growth through Marriott.com.

Little Boots chooses the Grand Millennium

Grand Millennium Beijing had the pleasure of hosting the famous English electro-pop singer-songwriter Victoria Christina Hesketh (Little Boots) during her recent visit to Beijing.



Winter escapes at The Peninsula Beijing

Treat yourself and your significant other to a relaxing winter excursion at The Peninsula Beijing with Winter Escape.

The package includes a daily buffet breakfast for two persons served in Beijing. Enjoy a choice of value-added benefits, including airport transfer, a spa voucher or afternoon tea.

Where: The Peninsula Beijing, 8 Jinhu Hutong, Dongcheng District

Cost: from 1,288 yuan per room per night (15 percent gratuity)

Website: peninsula.com/beijing



Kerry Club life indulgence

The newly renovated Club rooms and suites create a sense of privilege and a comfortable home-away-from-home experience.

This offer includes a one-way hotel transfer in a Wi-Fi-enabled limousine with butler service; a 300-yuan food and beverage credit for use at any of the hotel's outlets; a complimentary mini bar; and complimentary in-room wired Internet and Wi-Fi access.

Club privileges include full use of The Club Lounge, buffet breakfast, all day refreshments and snacks including a range of ice-creams and an exclusive selection of evening cocktails and canapés from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

Where: Kerry Hotel, Beijing, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 29, 2012

Cost: from 2,288 yuan per night

Dinning



Celebrate Christmas Eve at Crowne Plaza

Do you want to celebrate this Christmas Eve in German Style? Book this year's Christmas Eve celebration at the Crowne Plaza Beijing Chaoyang U-Town.

The Hopfenstube German restaurant and Brewery will be serving a German Christmas Set Menu with four of the hotel's house beers. The night will include live music performance and a raffle. The meal and entertainment cost an unexpectedly low 448 yuan per person.

The newly opened Cafe on the hotel's 6th floor is also offering an extravagant Christmas Eve buffet with fresh seafood, grilled meats, desserts and live prep stations for 388 yuan per person.

Where: Crowne Plaza Beijing Chaoyang U-Town, 3 Sanfeng North Area, Chaoyang District
When: December 24

Tel: Hopfenstube German restaurant and Brewery 5909 6683 or 1800 1323 278

Cafe on the 6th floor 5909 6688 ext. 3219 or 18001323278



Gifts and surprises at the Sweet Spot

Commemorate the season of sharing and giving with The Sweet Spot's beautiful gift baskets of joy-filled favorites such as succulent roast turkey, honey-glazed ham and sweet specialties ranging from puddings to cookies and chocolates.

Where: China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 43

(By Jackie Zhang)

Event

Workshop for aspiring calligraphers

The art of Chinese calligraphy has been around for thousands of years. Over that time, many forms and styles have emerged and been championed by artists and writers.

A good calligraphy hand was once considered the most worthy quality a man could have, and that is still true today! In modern times, calligraphy is used for many purposes. As an art form it is slowly spreading all over the world.

Join the new craze and discover one of China's oldest and most beautiful traditions by attending Culture Yard's calligraphy workshop.

At the workshop, you will learn basic knowledge about Chinese philology and how to use the four treasures of the study to produce your own calligraphic works. You can also study the different styles of calligraphy and practice the Kai and Ouyang styles.

Toward the end of the workshop, you will learn to write one phrase in the Kai style.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: December 11, 10 am – 1 pm

Cost: 120 yuan per person

Tel: 8404 4166

Email: contact@cultureyard.net

Fri, Dec.

9

Exhibition Chinese Ink and Wash Paintings by Zhao Xiaohai

Zhao uses an objective technique to present a combination of reality and illusion in his ink and wash paintings. He depicts modern times with a deep affection for the traditional arts,

specifically the various landscapes that appear throughout art history.

Where: babù space, Unit N2-40, Sanlitun Village North, 11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 16, daily, 10 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6415 8616



Sat, Dec.

10



Nightlife Yang Meng

The former vocalist of the band Spring and Autumn, Yang Meng, recently released his nine-song solo album, *Diary of The Sun City*, depicting a utopia.

Where: Gulou 121 Bar, 121 Jiu Gulou Dajie, Xicheng District

When: 9:30 pm

Admission: 40 yuan advance purchase, 50 yuan at the door
Tel: 8404 3430

Movie Skeletons (2010)

Directed by Nick Whitfield, this British comedy is about two men on a mission to clean out people's closets and discover the secrets they have been keeping. It won the Best New British Feature Film award at the 2010 Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, north section of Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 5 pm

Admission: 40 yuan

Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8001



Sun, Dec.

11

Concert The King's Singers

This group is currently the Prince Consort Ensemble in Residence at the Royal College of Music in London. One of the most sought-after vocal ensembles, the group is known for

its exceptional a cappella performances.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-500 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama Wangfujing

The play covers a span of 100 years from 1910 to 2010, reflecting the bitter history surrounding Wangfujing as a microcosm of the ups and downs of Beijing.

Where: Theater Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-580 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000



Mon, Dec.

12

Tue, Dec.

13



Exhibition Holding Fire – Wang Yifan Solo Exhibition

This exhibition is Wang Yifan's third solo exhibition, following ones in 2007 and 2009, presenting his latest creations during the past two years, including four paintings and three installations. One of his paintings depicts an old man holding a burning match, representing energy.

Where: Star Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 20, 2012, daily except Monday, 10 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9224

Wed, Dec.

14

Exhibition Hot Blood, Warm Blood, Cold Blood – Cheng Ran Solo Exhibition

This exhibition presents a video of the same title – a three-channel video with sound, in which the artist demonstrates three characteristics of the horse: hot blood, warm blood and cold blood.

Where: Galeire Urs Meile, 104 Caochangdi Village, Changyang District

When: Until February 12, 2012, daily except Monday, 11 am – 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6433 3393

Thu, Dec.

15

Movie Goodbye, Our Kindergarten (2011)

This Japanese film tells the story of five children that walk out on their kindergarten to visit their friend, who is hospitalized for a serious illness.

Where: Club 3, 43 Bei Sanhuan Xi Lu, Haidian District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 15 yuan

Tel: 8211 5288

(By He Jianwei)

